

Welcome to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1963 as an overlay of the J. F. Kennedy Space Center. The tremendous variety of habitats found on the refuge and its location on the Atlantic flyway makes Merritt Island an important wintering area for migratory birds.

Concentrations of waterfowl occur in the open waters of Mosquito Lagoon and in the brackish and fresh water impoundments during the fall and winter. Common species include scaup, mottled ducks, blue-winged teal, pintail, and wigeon.

Hunting on Merritt Island

Waterfowl hunting is permitted on 36,000 acres of the refuge's 140,000 acres. The remainder of the refuge is closed to hunting to protect non-game birds and endangered species and to permit other recreational activities to take place. Hunting areas include the open waters of Mosquito Lagoon and most impoundments outside the NASA security areas. Keep in mind the refuge may be closed to hunting at certain unannounced times during Space Shuttle operations. Consult local news sources for the Shuttle security schedule.

Hunt Regulations

Hunting regulations are designed to protect wildlife populations and the sportsman. All hunting will be in accordance with State and Federal regulations. Hunters should consult the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission regulations.

- **Parking** - Parking is allowed at all areas on the map marked "Hunter Access Route". Parking is also allowed on open dike roads. Please note that some dike roads open in the past may be closed. All vehicles and boat trailers must be pulled off to the side to allow for passing vehicles. **Parking is not allowed along the Black Point Wildlife Drive or Playalinda Beach Road (including parking lots 1-13 along the beach). Vehicles parked along this route, including in the paved pull-offs, will be towed.**
- **Season** - The open season for ducks and coots is concurrent with seasons established by the State of Florida. No species other than ducks and coots may be taken.
- **Hunt Days** - Hunting is allowed on Wednesdays, Saturdays, Sundays, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day within the designated season from one half hour before sunrise until 1:00 p.m.
- **Permits** - Refuge hunt permits are **required** for all hunters. This permit, attached to this leaflet, will be valid when

properly signed and carried on the hunter's person. In addition, individuals that hunt Areas 1, 2, or 4 must also carry their wallet-sized hunter's safety card as proof of completing the Florida or any other certified hunter safety course. Hunter safety courses are offered by the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. For more information about this course or to enroll, please call (352) 732-1225.

- **Youth Hunters** - In accordance with State regulations, hunters under age 16 may hunt with an adult 21 years of age or older. They must remain in sight and normal voice contact with the adult. Youth hunters under the age of 16 are not required to carry a hunter safety card in any area.
- **Hunt Areas** - Public hunting is permitted in four areas of the refuge. Areas closed to hunting are delineated on the map on the reverse side and/or conspicuously marked with "Area Closed" signs. Entry into Refuge may not begin until 2:00 a.m.
- **Steel Shot** - Only steel or other approved non-toxic shot may be used. Possession of lead or other toxic shot in any gauge is prohibited.
- **Hunting Blinds** - Hunters may bring portable blinds or construct temporary blinds of natural vegetation that will decompose easily. Temporary blinds do not become the builder's property and become available for general use on a first-come basis on subsequent days. Construction of permanent blinds, pit blinds and digging into dikes are prohibited activities.
- **Hunting or Shooting** - Hunting or shooting from or within 10 feet of any dike, roadway, or railroad fill is prohibited.
- **Personal Property** - Decoys, boats and other personal property must be removed by 2:00 p.m. daily.
- **Dogs** - The use of dogs is encouraged to retrieve dead or wounded waterfowl. Dogs must remain under the control of their handlers at all times.
- **Camping** - Camping and overnight parking is prohibited.
- **Boats** - The open waters of the refuge are extremely hazardous under certain wind and water conditions. It's advisable to check a weather advisory prior to your hunt. Coast Guard and Florida Marine Patrol boating regulations are applicable on refuge waters. Air thrust boats, hovercraft and personal watercraft are prohibited.
- **Boat Speed** - Many refuge waters are regulated to protect manatees from collisions with boats. All of Haulover Canal and most of Mosquito Lagoon have year-round speed restrictions in place. Heed all posted speed limits.
- **Hunting Guides** - All guides are required to purchase a Refuge Special Use Permit and have it in possession while guiding.
- **Alcohol** - The possession or use of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.

- **Universal Access** - Special accommodations are available for persons with physical disabilities. Contact the Refuge Headquarters for additional information.
- **Violations** - Repeat violations of refuge regulations may result in the loss of hunting privileges.

To provide the best quality hunting experience at Merritt Island N.W.R. the following changes will be implemented next year (the 2000/2001 season).

- **Daily Hunt Quotas** will be implemented in Hunt Area 1. This means hunters will have to apply in advance to hunt this area and only a predetermined number of permits will be issued each hunt day.
- **Hunter Safety Training** will be required in **all** areas.

Waterfowl Management Notes


Proper water level and adequate food availability are two very important aspects of waterfowl habitat. To ensure continuing high-quality habitat on Merritt Island N.W.R., marsh restoration projects were initiated during the summer of 1993. The main objective of these projects is to enhance the salt marsh ecosystem for many different species in coordination with mosquito control operations. Restoring the marsh areas by reconnecting them to the river will allow for greater species diversity in the impoundments. It will also be a part of the overall management of the Indian River Lagoon System in its entirety. Short-term inconveniences to waterfowl hunters may be realized in some areas. For example, during the 1998-99 season, some Hunt Areas may have conditions different than what has existed over the last several years. Lower water levels in various areas on a rotational basis will allow plants (waterfowl food) to grow in the otherwise nutrient-poor mud flats. This will help reestablish a food chain and provide better food supplies to increase the quality of habitat (and hunting) on a long-term basis. If you have questions about this project, contact the Refuge Headquarters.


For further information, write:

Refuge Manager
Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 6504
Titusville, Florida 32782
Phone (407) 861-0667
Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Hunting Recommendations

- Decoys and calls should be used to bring birds into ideal shooting range. When setting out decoys, place the outer decoy at 40 yards from the blind. This will help you judge when to shoot and result in fewer cripples and more birds in your bag.
- A good dog will speedily retrieve your game and lessen disturbances to flying birds in the area.
- Be a sportsman and respect the rights of other hunters afield. Before setting up, make sure you are not too close to others. (Allow a minimum of 100 yards between set-ups). This will allow birds more room to work and lessen the chances of flaring ducks working another hunter's decoys.
- An important aspect of the hunter's experience is watching birds work over decoys. Sky busters flare ducks and make them wary of hunting areas. By letting the birds come in close and picking your shots make for a more rewarding experience for all hunters and results in fewer cripples.
- Make sure of your shot. Many endangered and threatened wildlife species also use the refuge.

	Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge 1999-2000 Hunt Permit for Duck and Coot
Name _____	Print
Address _____	
I have read and understand Merritt Island N. W. R.'s hunting regulations.	
Signature _____	(This permit valid only when signed.)

	Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge 1999-2000 Hunt Permit for Duck and Coot
Name _____	Print
Address _____	
I have read and understand Merritt Island N. W. R.'s hunting regulations.	
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Refuge Signs - Know their Meaning



This sign delineates the refuge boundary.



Sanctuary Area - no entry of any kind allowed beyond this sign.



Designated route to hunt area.



Manatee Area - Maximum boat speed 8 m.p.h.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

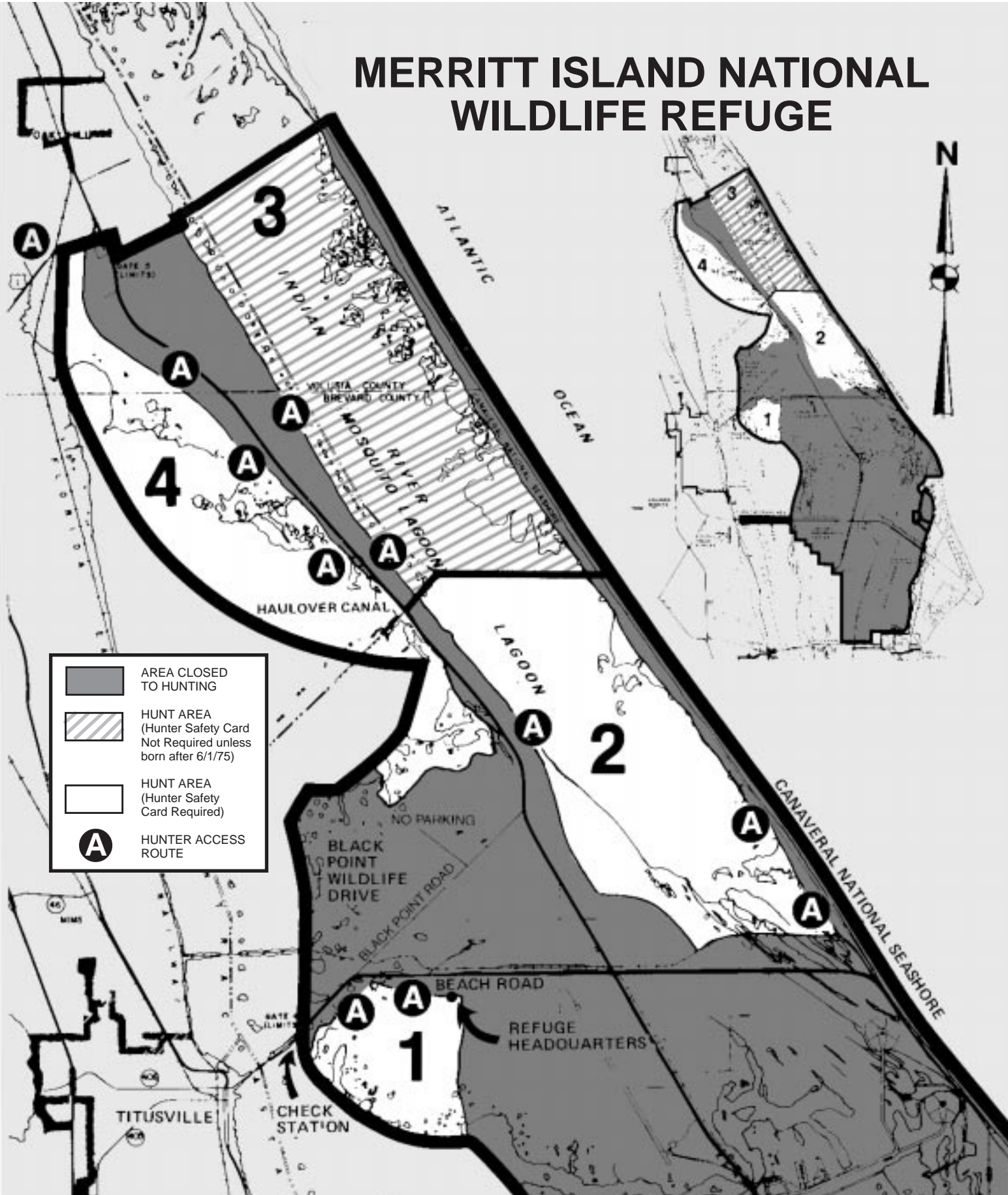


To Report Violators Call 407-861-0667

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Hunting Regulations



MERRITT ISLAND
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

